

Use Sunscreen Spray? Avoid Open Flame

You love a good summer barbecue and wisely use sunscreen if you are out in the sun. What you may not know is that if you apply certain sunscreen sprays and then come close to a source of flame, you may risk the sunscreen catching fire and giving you a serious burn.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has become aware of five separate incidents in which people wearing sunscreen spray near sources of flame suffered significant burns that required medical treatment. The specific products reported to have been used in these cases were voluntarily recalled from the market, so should no longer be on store shelves (<http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=124138&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=1747798&highlight>).

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ingredients, commonly alcohol. The same is true for certain other spray products, such as hairspray and insect repellants, and even some non-spray sunscreens may contain flammable ingredients. Many flammable products have a label warning against their use near an open flame.

You should never apply a product labeled as flammable while you are near a source of flame. In the five incidents reported to FDA, however, the burns occurred after the sunscreen spray had been applied. The ignition sources were varied and involved lighting a cigarette, standing too close to a lit citronella candle, approaching a grill, and in one case, doing some welding. These incidents suggest that there is a possibility of catching fire if you are near an open flame or a spark after spraying on a flammable sunscreen—even if you believe you have waited a sufficient time for the sunscreen to dry and your skin feels dry.

"Based on this information, we recommend that after you have applied a sunscreen spray labeled as flammable, you consider avoiding being near an open flame, sparks or an ignition source," says Narayan Nair, M.D., a lead medical officer at FDA.

No children were involved in the reported burn incidents involving sunscreen sprays. However, keeping children safe near flammable materials is very important because burns have the potential to be more severe in children compared to adults. Parents and caregivers should read the product label and choose a sunscreen

that is not flammable if there is a possibility that the child will be near a source of flame.

Sunscreen a Must

Lydia Velazquez, Pharm.D., an FDA expert on sunscreen and other skin-related products, says people should "absolutely be using a sunscreen product before venturing out in the summer sun." Spending time in the sun increases your risk of skin cancer and early skin aging. To decrease this risk, regularly use a sunscreen with a Broad Spectrum SPF (Sun Protection Factor) value of 15 or higher and other sun protection measures including: limiting time in the sun, especially from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and wearing long-sleeve shirts, pants, hats and sunglasses.

"It's always important to read the label of a product before you use it and to follow the directions," Velazquez says. Also consider your location and activities. Just as you should choose a water-resistant sunscreen if you will be swimming or sweating, if you anticipate being near an open flame or another source that may give off sparks, look closely for flammability warnings on your sunscreen product and consider using a non-flammable sunscreen instead.

Safety Precautions

- When you choose a sunscreen, think about where you'll be using it. If you'll be anywhere near a flame source, avoid any product with a flammability warning and

choose another non-flammable sunscreen product instead. This recommendation is particularly important when it comes to choosing a product for children since they are frequently active and may get near a flame source.

- While applying and wearing sunscreen products labeled as flammable, do not smoke, and avoid open flames from lighting cigarettes, lit cigarettes, grilling, candles or sparking materials.
- Do not apply flammable products to yourself or someone else near an open flame.

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